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THOSE "YANKEE SHOOTTELEERS"

By JOHN SCOFIELD

Never has the United States been so rifle-minded and pistol-minded. All over the land target practice has become in the past few years an integral part of country living. And well that it has; for the practice of yesterday is a valuable part of the preparedness of today. In the circumstances the great September meet of the National Rifle Association at Camp Perry in Ohio takes on new importance. Likewise the history behind its two famous trophies.—EDITOR.

So long ago, as 1873, when Ulysses S. Grant was swept back into the White House on the high wave of popularity, when "Boss" Tweed was on trial, when the San Salvador earthquake and the wreck of the *Atlantic* were tragedies in everybody's mind and, of all things, the reading room of the Boston Public Library was opened on Sundays, a bit of news made scant impression on the American public. What did it matter over here that the Irish Eight, firing for the Elcho Shield at Wimbledon, had won?

But it mattered a great deal to the marksman of Erin, who by defeating the English and Scottish rifle teams, had carried off the long-range shooting championship of the British Isles. And more so as time went on; for it was following this victory that Major Arthur B. Leech, the captain and organizer of the Irish Eight, cast about for fresh fields to conquer in a match for the rifle championship of the world. The United States was the obvious point of attack; so, through the hands of the great James Gordon Bennett and his *New York Herald*, a challenge went forth. Although thus widely publicized, however, there were no takers until at length the Amateur Rifle Club of New York met and accepted the challenge.

Looking back, this acceptance seems rashness itself. No more than a few of the men had ever fired at ranges beyond six hundred yards—and then only once, when the scores were phenomenally poor. Just how they hoped to defeat those picked British rifle shots in a match to be fired at eight hundred, nine hundred and one thousand yards no one seemed to know. And outside the club's membership interest was at best apathetic.

Scheduled for the autumn in 1874, the match was to be between teams of six or eight, at the option of the Irish, and to be fired on the Long Island range of the recently organized National Rifle Association at Creedmoor. Fifteen shots were to be fired by each man at eight hundred, nine hundred and one thousand yards, the Americans to be armed with bona fide breech-loading rifles of home manufacture and the Irish with muzzle-loaders by John Rigby, of Dublin.

Among the members of the Amateur Rifle Club none could hope to equal the scores of the Irish Eight in the Elcho Shield match, which they kept as a measure of what was to be expected of them. Nor were American rifles the match of the Rigbys available. Fortunately, interest in the forthcoming contest developed a rivalry on the part of two American arms-makers and as the time drew near the Remington and Sharps companies were, they hoped, ready for Rigby competition. When the team was finally picked, both of these improved rifles had been adopted by the club.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Major Leech was having troubles of his own. Man after man of the original team, unable to make the trip to the New World, dropped out. But he got together the six best marksmen he could and boarded the *Scotia* with them and



PRIVATE Alfred L. Wolters of the United States Marines had to make only twenty consecutive holes through the twenty-inch inner "V-ring" of a target over half a mile from the firing line at Camp Perry, Ohio, last year to come out with flying colors. But he proceeded to add seven, for a top record in long-range shooting.

a few friends, including the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

On the twenty-fourth of September the Irish and American teams went through their first work-out on the Creedmoor range. Scores were pretty close, no one standing out particularly save the heavily bearded Henry Fulton. The score of this surveyor, a little under thirty years of age, in the preliminary match topped, at 168, even the best of the Wimbledon records and thus aroused great expectations of him for the morrow.

For Fulton was the "anchor man" of the Yankee squad that was destined to face some eight thousand spectators, to no inconsiderable extent made up of the loyal Irish element in New York. His teammates, all bearded or with heavy mustaches, were General T. S. Dakin, a veteran of the Civil War; Colonel John Bodine and Messrs. G. W. Yale, L. L. Hepburn and H. A. Gildersleeve. And against them they had Mr. Rigby, whose muzzle-loading rifle the match was to test; Mr. Wilson, Mr. Milner and Mr. Johnson, all merchants in Dublin, and Captain Philip Walker and Dr. John B. Hamilton, of the British Army.

Assigned to their respective targets, each team shot steadily at eight hundred yards. When the scores were tallied it was 326 for the Americans, with the

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Those "Yankee Shooteleers"

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Irish nine behind. Young Fulton, true to the promise of the day before, came through with the top score of the stage, 58—equalled on the British squad by Dr. Hamilton's. At nine hundred, when the fifteen shots a man were concluded, the Irish had made 312 points, while the Americans were two below that number. This left the Irish only seven points behind for the difficult thousand-yard stage to fire—with past performances at that distance to their advantage.

The Irish squad finished its thousand-yard firing several shots ahead. But in the excitement of closing the great match it was not generally known to the firers that the American team had fallen behind until the last shot (Colonel Bodine's) was to be fired. A miss would leave the Americans losers by a single point; if he could make a bull's eye, four would be added to the aggregate and the Irish would be left three points behind. Aware of this, Colonel Bodine stretched carefully and steadily on the firing point, aimed deliberately and fired. Of the importance of that one shot none knew until a concerted shout arose when the bull's eye hit half a mile away was denoted by the white paddle marker on the small target. Bodine had saved the day—although without Fulton's 171 total over the course breaking his own record of twenty-four hours earlier, no such chance could have presented itself.

It was during the luncheon lull that Major Leech, expressing his appreciation of the way he and the members of his team had been received by the American public, presented to the Amateur Rifle Club the great pitcher that has stood to this day as the premier award of long-range shooters in the United States—the Leech Cup, made of Irish silver. Not fired for until the next year, 1875, the club passed this trophy on to the then young National Rifle Association, which set it up as the long-range service rifle championship cup of this country. Bodine won it with a 205 x 225

score, beating Fulton—who went out for a miss on his first shot at one thousand yards.

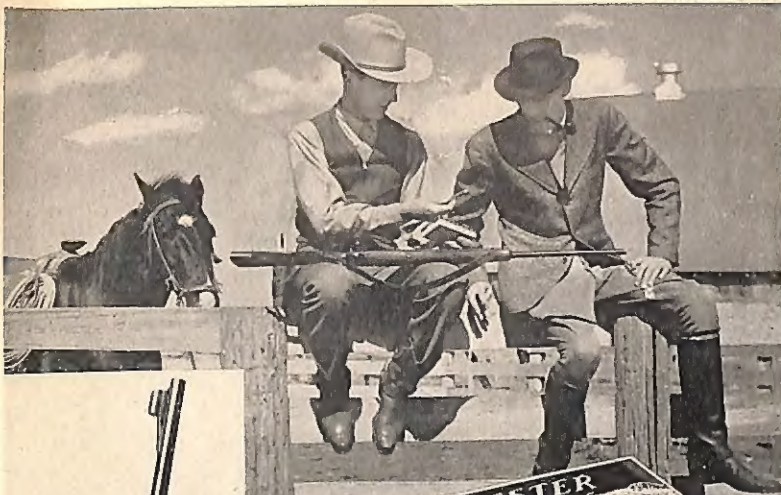
Meanwhile the Irishmen, after a tour of the United States, had gone home—but not without posting a return match, to be played on the Dollymount range near Dublin in the June of 1875. All but one of the American team, Hepburn's place being taken by R. C. Colman, went over—to find Rigby and Walker out of the Irish squad and Pollock and McKenna in.

Once more the Americans won with a score of 967 against the Irishmen's total of 929. Both Dakin and Gildersleeve turned in a 164.

It was after that match the visiting Yankees made a good will tour of the British Isles. This took them to the great championship matches at Wimbledon, where they accepted in the name of American riflemen a silver challenge cup presented by Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria. This trophy was shot for promptly at Wimbledon by the members of the American team over a thousand-yard course, thirty shots. The match was won by Major Fulton, who finished with a score of 133 out of the possible 150. It was then decided to place it in competition in the United States the following year, and it has remained one of the two great long-range trophies on this side of the Atlantic.

Home again, the victorious Americans became heroes of the day. Currier and Ives celebrated their triumph with lithographs, now among the rarest of American shooting prints and they became the subject of at least two songs. Sam DeVere, at the Park Theater in Brooklyn, sang Ed Benedict's:

"We are the plucky little team
Of Yankee Shooteleers,
Who marched away to Dolly-
mount
And won the Irish cheers.
We scored a bull's eye every
pop—
Oh nine times out of ten,
And won a cup of friendship
from
Warmhearted Irishmen."



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A final match between Ireland and the United States was fired in September, 1876, at Creedmoor, when the Yankee against bested the Irish—by a score of 1165 to their 1154. Later that year the Palma trophy matches, now a thing of the past, took the place of those between Irish and American marksmen.

So to the present day and generation. Last year at the National rifle and pistol matches at Camp Perry in Ohio a private of the United States Marine Corps made history by coming into possession of the same Wimbledon Cup that Princess Louise presented to the American riflemen in 1875. Alfred L. Wolters did this by settling down on the thousand-yard range and proceeding to defeat well-nigh two thousand other hopefuls by punching twenty-seven consecutive holes through the twenty-inch inner "V ring" of the target more than a half a mile down the firing line. This is a record unparalleled in the annals of long-range shooting.

The course is still fired entirely at one thousand yards, twenty shots—with the privilege of continuing firing if all of these shots have hit within the inner bull's eye. Private Wolters is the first ever to have kept all twenty within the V ring and his added seven should hold his record safe for a long time.

The Leech Cup likewise continues to go the rounds. It is fired for at the same eight hundred, nine hundred and thousand yards as at the original international match at Creedmoor—though only seven shots, rather than fifteen, are fired at each range. The Leech and Wimbledon events are but two of the week-long schedule of individual matches to be fired at Camp Perry. All told, more than four thousand military and civilian shooters will fire on the Ohio National Guard range on Lake Erie in the early part of September. They will be devotees of the big shoulder-bruising Springfield, now used in the Wimbledon and Leech matches, of the "pip-squeak" twenty-two-caliber rifle, or of handguns of various types. And certainly this of all years is a good one for them to practice the art of shooting.



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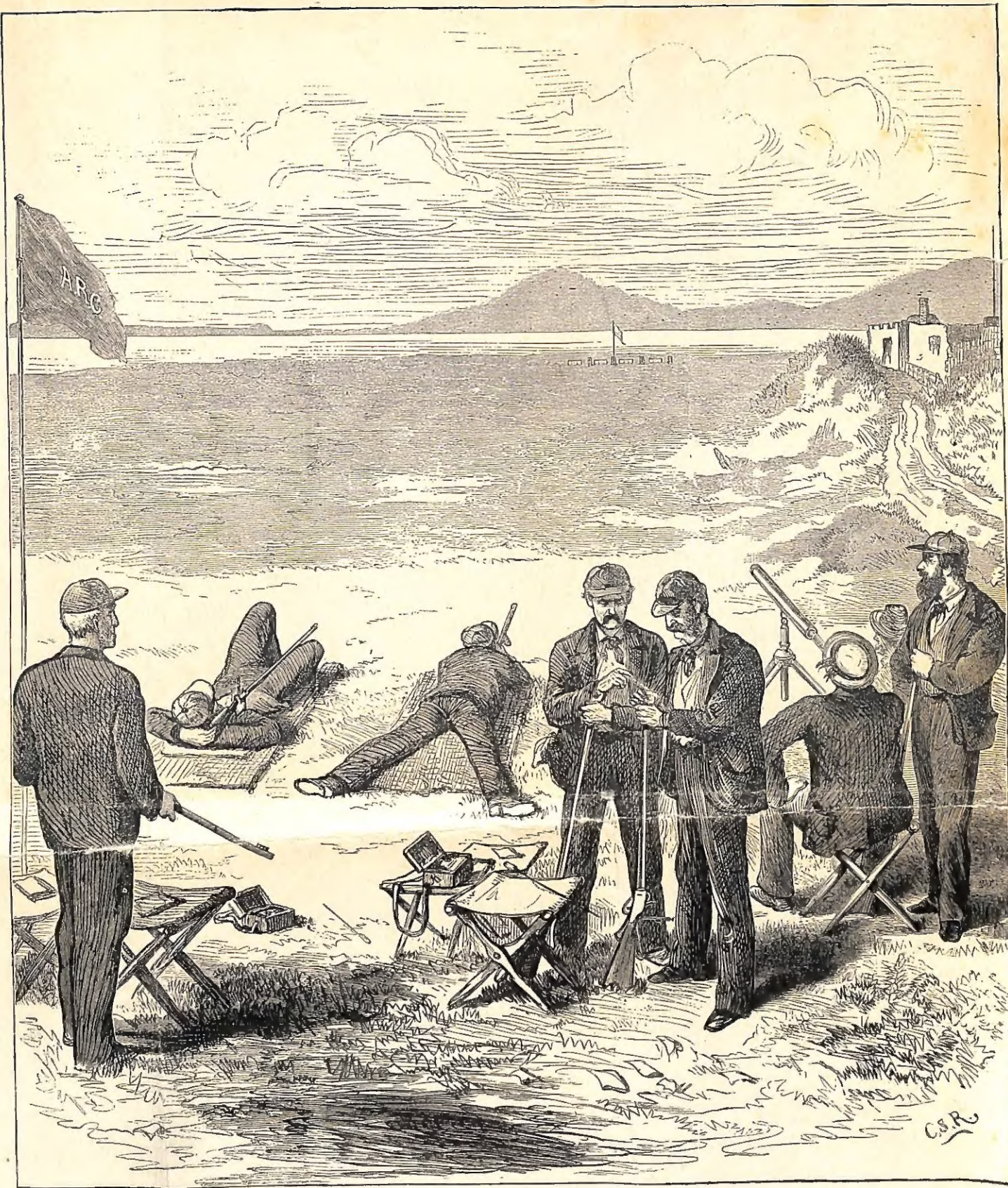
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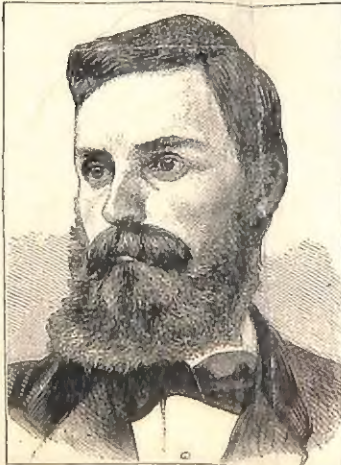


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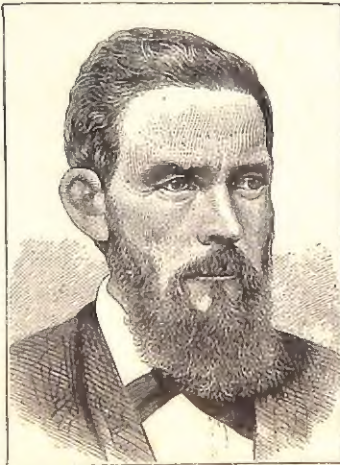
MAJOR FULTON, of the "Yankee Shooteleers" in the seventies, was the first winner of the Wimbledon Cup. He was then under thirty and none of his teammates had reached the age of fifty, looks to the contrary notwithstanding. These portraits of days long before the smooth-face era of sports are from *Harp-er's Weekly* in 1875, as is also the sketch of the American team practicing at the Dollymount range, Dublin.



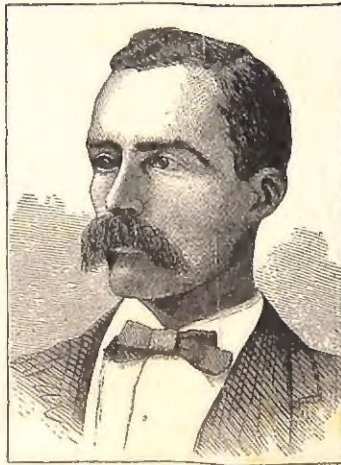
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